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SERVICE DATE - MAY 21, 2004

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 253X)**

**Norfolk Southern Railway Company – Abandonment Exemption –  
in Edgefield County, SC**

**BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Edgefield County, South Carolina. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends 4.5 miles from milepost AB-1.5 at Escambia Junction to milepost AB-6.0 at Trenton, South Carolina. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, NS will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE**

NS states that no traffic has originated, terminated or moved overhead on the line for at least two years. According to NS, the land use along the right-of-way is 75 percent forest, 20 percent agricultural, and 5 percent residential.

NS states that the line is the end segment of an unused, dead-end branch line that is connected to the NS line between Columbia, South Carolina and Augusta, Georgia.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

NS submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. NS served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. We have reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

NS states that one hazardous waste site is located near the right-of-way between mileposts AB-1.5 and AB-2.0. The Federal Pacific Electric-SCD 036 137 248 site covers 20 acres. The site contains an onsite 3-acre pond, which was previously used for treated wastewater effluent, and a paint sludge drying bed. The Edgefield County Administrator submitted comments in July 2001 recommending that NS consult with the South Carolina Department of

Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) regarding cleanup issues for the hazardous waste site. We will recommend a condition requiring NS to consult with SCDHEC regarding the hazardous waste site prior to beginning salvage activities.

The Administrator also stated that the county would prefer the line to remain in service to provide rail access to several parcels of land that could be developed for industrial use. In addition, the Administrator stated that the line is adjacent to the Ten Governors Rail Trail and suggested that NS consult with the Town of Edgefield to determine effects of the proposed abandonment on the town's plan to extend the trail. We will include the Town of Edgefield on the service list for this proceeding.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) initially submitted comments in July 2001 stating that there is potential habitat for Federally protected species in the area of the proposed abandonment. FWS stated that the following are the Federally-listed threatened and endangered species in the county: the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*); the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*); the Carolina heelsplitter (*Lasmigona decorata*); the Miccosukee gooseberry (*Ribes echinellum*); and the relict trillium (*Trillium reliquum*). FWS subsequently submitted comments in April 2003 stating that the proposed abandonment is not likely to have adverse effects on resources under the jurisdiction of FWS that are protected by the Endangered Species Act and no further action would be required.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources submitted comments in April 2003 stating that it had identified no natural resources of specific concern within the area of the proposed abandonment and that the proposed abandonment would not substantially alter the quality of the natural environment.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers submitted comments in May 2003 stating that a Corps permit would not be required for the proposed abandonment.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) submitted comments in May 2003 stating that 2 geodetic station markers have been identified that may be affected by the proposed abandonment, and requests that NGS receive at least 90 days notification in advance of any activities that will disturb or destroy the markers.

The South Carolina State Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have not yet completed their review of the proposed abandonment. We will recommend a condition requiring NS to consult with the Clearinghouse and NRCS prior to beginning salvage activities.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

NS submitted an historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. NS served the report on the South Carolina

Department of Archives and History (SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). In the report, NS states that there are no structures on the line that are 50 years old or older. The SHPO has submitted comments stating that no historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected by the proposed abandonment. We have reviewed the report and the information provided by the SHPO and concur with the SHPO's comments.

Pursuant to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for implementing the section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 CFR 800.11(d), consists of the NS's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

### **CONDITIONS**

We recommend that the following environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority:

1. **Norfolk Southern Railway Company shall consult with the National Geodetic Survey and provide the National Geodetic Survey with 90 days notice prior to disturbing or destroying any geodetic station markers.**
2. **Prior to beginning salvage activities, Norfolk Southern Railway Company shall consult with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control regarding cleanup issues for the Federal Pacific Electric-SCD 036 137 248 hazardous waste site.**
3. **Prior to beginning salvage activities, Norfolk Southern Railway Company shall consult with the South Carolina State Clearinghouse and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended conditions are imposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

## **PUBLIC USE**

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice. NS states that it does not have fee title to the entire right-of-way of the line proposed for abandonment and would not have a contiguous corridor available for public use. NS states that it believes the right-of-way would not be suitable for highways, other forms of mass transit, energy production related transportation facilities, conservation or recreation corridors, or other public use.

## **TRAILS USE**

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

## **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

The Board's Office of Public Services responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

## **COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Rini Ghosh, who prepared this environmental assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 253X) in all correspondence, including e-filings addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Rini Ghosh, the

environmental contact for this case by phone at (202) 565-1539, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at [ghoshr@stb.dot.gov](mailto:ghoshr@stb.dot.gov).

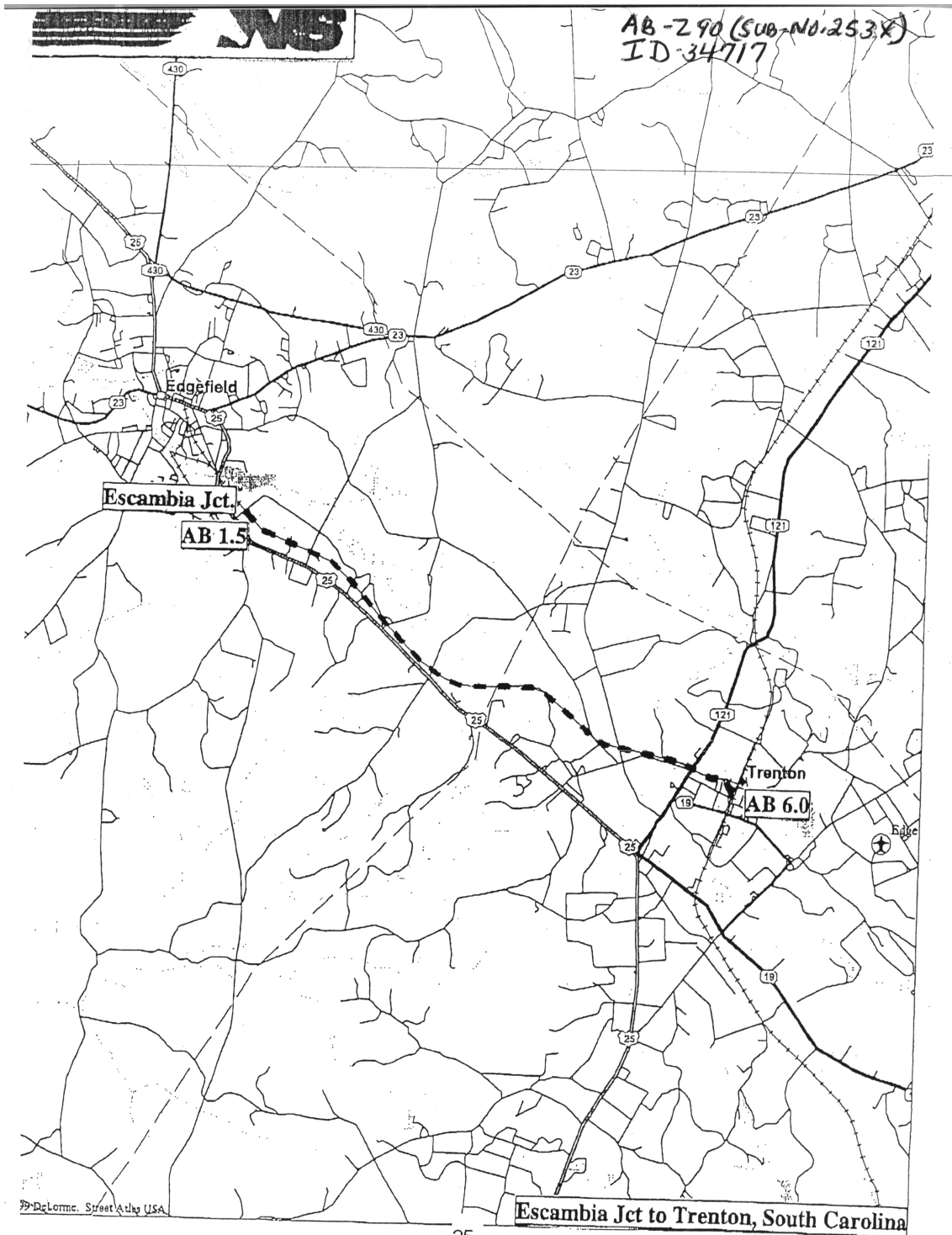
Date made available to the public: May 21, 2004

**Comment due date: June 7, 2004.**

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment



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